



301 N. Orange Grove Blvd. Pasadena, CA 91103 (626) 449-3470 information@neighborhooduu.org

Prayer for All Who Mother

By Rev. Victoria Weinstein

We reflect in thanksgiving this day for all those whose lives have nurtured ours.

The life-giving ones

Who heal with their presence

Who listen in sympathy

Who give wise advice...but only when asked for it.

We are grateful for all those who have mothered us

Who have held us gently in times of sorrow

Who celebrated with us our triumphs -- no matter how small

Who noticed when we changed and grew,

who praised us for taking risks

who took genuine pride in our success,

and who expressed genuine compassion when we did not succeed.

On this day that honors Mothers

let us honor all people

who from somewhere in their being

have freely and wholeheartedly given life,

and sustenance, and vision to us.

Spirit of life,

grant us life-giving ways

strength for birthing,

and a nurturing spirit

that we may take attentive care of our world,

our communities,

help us to care for those precious beings

entrusted to us by biology, or by destiny, or by friendship, fellowship or fate.

Give us the heart of a mother. Amen



301 N. Orange Grove Blvd. Pasadena, CA 91103 (626) 449-3470 information@neighborhooduu.org

Few of us might know that the origins of Mother's Day come from one of our spiritual" foremothers," a 19th century Unitarian poet, activist and abolitionist named Julia Ward Howe. Howe is most well known for her two contributions to history: one, the lyrics to the patriotic anthem "Battle Hymn of the Republic;" and two, her work to establish a Mother's Peace Day. Howe became a passionate anti-war activist after her work on the front lines of the Civil War, where she cared for the wounded and witnessed the wrenching pain of other mothers who had lost their sons.

Here is the text of the Mother's Day proclamation Julia Ward Howe wrote in 1870 in which she explains the original intent of the holiday:

Arise, all women who have hearts, whether your baptism be that of water or of tears!

From the bosom of the devastated earth a voice goes up with our own. It says, "Disarm, disarm! The sword is not the balance of justice." Blood does not wipe out dishonor nor violence indicate possession.

In the name of womanhood and of humanity, I earnestly ask that a general congress of women without limit of nationality may be appointed and held at some place deemed most convenient and at the earliest period consistent with its objects, to promote the alliance of the different nationalities, the amicable settlement of international questions, the great and general interests of peace.

Howe's call for a Mother's Peace Day was taken up by many others, including Anna Jarvis, who in 1907 succeeded in making Mother's Day an officially recognized holiday. In 1914, President Woodrow Wilson finally acknowledged the holiday as a "public expression of our love and reverence for all mothers." While the holiday has many meanings, every year on this day mothers have joined together to honor the holiday's original intention and to call for peace. One of the most well known actions was taken during the Vietnam War. A group called Another Mother for Peace came together to create a Mother's day campaign to send President Lyndon Johnson and members of Congress Mother's Day cards. You might remember how Los Angeles artist Lorraine Schneider created a bright yellow card with a sunflower saying "War is not healthy for children and other living things." Inside, the card said:

For my Mother's Day gift this year,

I don't want candy or flowers.

I want an end to killing. We who have given life

must be dedicated to preserving it. Please talk peace.

Mother's Day is a time for all people of conscience to come together to collectively nurture peaceful communities and to call for an end to violence and war. This morning, as we gather as a community to



301 N. Orange Grove Blvd. Pasadena, CA 91103 (626) 449-3470 information@neighborhooduu.org

celebrate all who mother, we can carry forward Julia Ward Howe's original charge. We wish for our children, and all children to grow up in a peaceful world. On Mother's Day, we recognize how far away we are from this wish and how much has to change for a vision of peace to prevail. It should be no mother's worry that her own life or her child's safety is at risk, whether in her own home, in school, or in the community.

Over the past few months, our congregation's support of Honduran mother Rosa and her four children has brought us face to face with the realities of violence against women and children and its connection to Central American migration. We cannot shy away from the reason why Rosa chose to leave her home country to make a better life here for her children. Her choice to walk 2,500 miles with four young children was driven by a dream of a kind of safety and security that her home country simply could not provide.

I remember driving Rosa and her two youngest children to one of their immigration appointments downtown in the pouring rain. My Spanish isn't great, but we could carry on basic conversation despite the language barrier. From the beginning, I knew that Rosa was fleeing domestic and gang violence. She is a very private person and shares things sparingly. But she did share with me the kind of barbaric violence that was commonplace in her town—she told me her female neighbor's abusive husband amputated her leg with a machete so she could not leave the house.

Rosa's own children's father was abusive to her, and gangs had threatened to kill her and her family. Her story is sadly not unique but rather a part of a larger problem of violence in Central America which has driven the bulk of the migrant caravans. Rosa and thousands of other families have made the difficult decision to leave everything they know in search of safety and a better life for their children—a life where boys are not recruited for gangs and girls are not targets of trafficking and kidnapping, but instead can have the possibility of education and a normal childhood. A life of economic possibility without the burden of gang-related threats of extortion. The British-Somali poet Warsan Shire eloquently articulates the plight of asylum seekers like Rosa in her poem "Home."

no one leaves home unless
home is the mouth of a shark
you only run for the border
when you see the whole city running as well
you have to understand,
that no one puts their children in a boat
unless the water is safer than the land

The Central American Northern Triangle of Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala are among the most violent places in the world, and the most dangerous places in the world to be a woman.



301 N. Orange Grove Blvd. Pasadena, CA 91103 (626) 449-3470 information@neighborhooduu.org

[The Latin American Working Group](#) reports that in 2017, 388 women were murdered. That is, over 32 women were killed on average every month- nearly one woman per day. The high levels of violence against women are often attributed to gang violence and organized crime, yet the reality is that women are just as vulnerable in their own homes. According to data from the Honduran Courts of Peace and Letters, between 2008 and 2015 there was a 390% increase in cases of intimate partner violence. 54% of the complaints expired before they received any response from officials. According to the [Center for Women's Rights \(Centro de Derechos de la Mujer – CDM\)](#), 95% of femicides committed in 2017 and the first weeks of 2018 have not been punished. The Honduran government also has not developed the tools to properly address the country's rampant violence against women.

You would think the untenable situation in Central America would solicit a compassionate response from our nation. The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 declared the human right to asylum, explicitly stating that "everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution." It is legal for anyone to seek asylum. However, under the Trump administration, these doors to asylum have been shut one by one, specifically limiting asylum claims based on gang-related or gender-based violence.

As the [Capital Area Immigrants Rights \(or CAIR\) Coalition](#) reports, in a June 2018 case entitled "In Matter of A-B-", Attorney General Jeff Sessions called for the denial of asylum claims for women who are fleeing domestic violence and for individuals fleeing from violence in Central America generally. The decision overruled a prior Board of Immigration Appeals (BIA) decision that established a basis for victims of severe domestic violence to be eligible to apply for asylum and seek protection. Before Matter of A-B-, immigrants could qualify to apply for asylum if they could prove persecution or fear of persecution in their homeland based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion or "membership in a particular social group," which included victims of domestic violence and other severe abuse. Matter of A-B-removed that protection for domestic violence victims.

Legal groups like CAIR and the Los Angeles-based Immigrant Defenders are fighting for people like Rosa and challenging this decision case by case. The battle is uphill in a political climate hostile to immigration, one where families are still separated and children are still dying in federal custody. Hundreds of migrant mothers have stories like Rosa's. The reality is that until a significant political shift their claim to asylum will most likely not be successful.

What then is our role? Even if our government is unwilling to act compassionately, we still can. We can be the face of peace through our welcome and hospitality, kindness and support. We create a more peaceful world through our willingness to bind our lives together with the struggles of immigrant families like Rosa's. We can be the face of peace by educating ourselves and advocating globally for the rights of women and children and supporting organizations doing the work on the front lines.

**Neighborhood Unitarian
Universalist Church**



Courageous Mothering
Rev. Lissa Gundlach
May 12, 2019

301 N. Orange Grove Blvd. Pasadena, CA 91103 (626) 449-3470 information@neighborhooduu.org

As artist Lorraine Schneider wrote in her famous mother's day card,

For my Mother's Day gift this year,

I don't want candy or flowers.

I want an end to killing. We who have given life must be dedicated to preserving it.

Please talk peace.

Amen, and may it be so.